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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0151  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0347  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 0709  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1028  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000426

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TAGS: [E](#)[A](#)[I](#)[R](#) [E](#)[I](#)[N](#)[V](#) [P](#)[R](#)[E](#)[L](#) [N](#)[I](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA:AVIATION UPDATE

REF: LAGOS 195

Classified By: Acting Political/Economic Section Chief Shannon Ross  
for reasons 1.4 (B/D).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) recently suspended air operators certificates (AOC) for three domestic carriers. The Aviation Ministry and NCAA created several new committees to address airport security, air space management, and personnel training. A separate committee on airport security was established at the Ministerial level to protect airports from potential attacks, especially in light of violence in the Niger Delta. Ministry personnel said Aviation Minister Borishade was pleased with progress on the draft Aviation bill submitted to the National Assembly, and the October Bellview and December Sosoliso air plane crash investigations. End summary.

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Suspension of 2 Air Operators Certificates,  
More Likely to Follow  
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¶2. (C) On March 19, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) suspended the air operator certificate (AOC) for two domestic carriers, Fresh Air and IRS Airlines. Nigerian Air Space Management (NCAA) Director General (DG) Iyayi said a third domestic airline, Space World Airlines, had their AOC suspended last week. NCAA Director General (DG) Harold Demuren said more domestic carriers will face suspension of AOCs if they do not meet NCAA safety standards. However, he suggested the NCAA would remove the suspension of AOCs for Fresh Air and IRS within the next two weeks. (Note: This fits previous suspension patterns in which domestic airlines such as Bellview, Chachangi, Sosoliso, and others had their AOCs temporarily suspended, only to have them reinstated within one or two weeks. End note).

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New Aviation Committees Established, But Industry Skeptical  
of Efficacy; Nigeria to Seek International Assistance  
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¶3. (C) NAMA DG Roland Iyayi said Aviation Minister Babalola

Borishade created four new ministerial committees in early March to implement recommendations made at the January 19-20 Aviation Sector Reform Conference (reftel) in Lagos. These committees include: Air Space Management, Airport Infrastructure and Security, Airline Standards, and Manpower and Development. Industry experts remain skeptical real reforms will be implemented, because candidates for the committees will be chosen by the Aviation Ministry, not the private sector, putting into question the impartiality and independence of the committees.

14. (SBU) NCAA DG Harold Demuren said he created three new committees within the NCAA to cover: civil aviation regulations, audit of personnel licensing system, and safety verification teams to complete tasks left incomplete by the Presidential Task Force Committee on Airworthiness. He is currently visiting Montreal, Canada to speak with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) members before meeting with FAA officials in Washington, DC he said. Demuren said the NCAA is seeking assistance from ICAO, World Bank, and Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) to bring experienced expatriate safety inspectors to Nigeria.

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Aviation Sector Concerns with Niger Delta Security  
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15. (C) Minister Borishade's Technical Advisor, Remi Olumuyiwa, said aviation security remains a priority, especially in light of violence in the Niger Delta. He said the Committee on Airport Infrastructure and Security was established to address airport security. The Committee is chaired by Peter Igbinedion, former Director of FAAN and

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brother to Edo State Governor Lucky Igbinedion. Olumuyiwa said they had not received any specific threats on airports by militant groups, but that the Ministry was placing more emphasis than "ever before" on airport security. He noted the Ministry had increased the number of Mobile Police and airport security personnel at Lagos Murtala Muhammad International Airport since January when the first hostage crisis took place.

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Aviation Committees Give Draft Aviation Bill Positive Marks  
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16. (C) Minister Borishade's Technical Advisor, Remi Olumuyiwa, said the Minister was satisfied with the National Assembly's initial reaction to the draft Aviation Bill submitted last week. NCAA Legal Advisor S.M. Gaiya said the NCAA deliberated on the draft comments made by the FAA with both the Senate and House of Representatives Committee on Aviation, and that both committees agreed to incorporate the majority of FAA recommendations into the bill. Olumuyiwa emphasized the Minister was building "relationships" with National Assembly members to push the bill into law as soon as possible. However, he said passage would take a minimum of six months.

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Bellview And Sosoliso Airplane Crash Results Pending  
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17. (C) Accidents Investigation and Prevention Bureau (AIPB) Director Angus Ozoka said they were making progress on both the Bellview and Sosoliso airplane crash investigations, but that it would take time before results would be released to the public. Based on preliminary findings, AIPB Deputy Director Remi Faminu, suspected mechanical errors and maintenance deficiencies resulted in the October 22 Bellview crash. He did not comment on the Sosoliso crash. Ozoka said he presented an interim report to the Minister in mid-January on the status of the investigations, and the Minister was pleased with their progress.

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Comment  
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18. (C) The suspension of air operators is not surprising, as most domestic carriers have had their certificates suspended at one point or another for non-compliance to safety standards. The Bellview and Sosoliso air crashes forced the Ministry to move to enforce aviation safety and compliance. However, much work remains to be done, and the NCAA does not have the resources or independence needed to meet its objectives. The Aviation Bill, if passed into law, should go a long way in addressing those concerns. The Aviation Minister appears to be using violence in the Niger Delta as a pretext to push ahead his original plans to beef up airport security throughout the country. Regardless of the credibility of militia threats to the aviation sector, increased attention on airport security is a welcome development. End comment.

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